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AUTHOR Knight, G. Diane; Sedlacek, William E.
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ABSTRACT

A survey of 542 recent graduates of the University of Maryland, College Park, indicated many significant differences between males and females. More males (71 percent vs. 64 percent) reported professional managerial or technical occupations, while more females (25 percent vs. 12 percent) reported clerical-sales positions. Seventy-five percent of those working in education were women, while 62 percent working in large business organizations were men. Males employed full time reported significantly higher mean salaries ($14,087 vs. $10,411) across all occupational areas. While males and females reported satisfaction with their educational experiences, males were more satisfied with their career planning than females. Men and women used university career planning services to the same degree. Three recommendations for career planning for women are presented: (1) career planning should start in the freshman year or earlier; (2) career planning should involve established academic structures as well as student services; and (3) career planning beyond graduation should be emphasized. (Author/LB)

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STATUS OF RECENT MALE AND FEMALE COLLEGE GRADUATES

G. Diane Knight and William E. Sedlacek

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Summary

A survey of 542 recent graduates of UMCP indicated many significant differences between males and females. More males (71% vs. 64%) reported professional managerial or technical occupations, while more females (25% vs. 12%) reported clerical-sales positions. Seventy-five percent of those working in education were women, while 62% of those working in large business organizations were men. Males employed full time reported significantly higher mean salaries ($14,087 vs. $10,411) across all occupational areas. While males and females reported satisfaction with their educational experiences, males were more satisfied with their career planning than females. Men and women used university career planning services to the same degree. Three recommendations for career planning for women were presented and discussed: (1) career planning should start in the freshman year or earlier, (2) career planning should involve established academic structures as well as student services, and (3) career planning beyond graduation should be emphasized.

The status of women in the marketplace has long been a matter of concern. In 1979, women constituted 41.2% of the labor force (Bureau of Labor statistics, 1980), and in spite of efforts to equalize the compensation earned by women and men, the median annual salary for women working full time in 1978 was 59% of that earned by men. In the past, this difference has been the result of unequal compensation paid to women and men for similar work. Although such differences may still exist, Sell and Johnson (1979), analyzing data for 1960-70, concluded that the difference in earnings received by men and women was related to unequal access to occupations which women experience rather than unequal pay for the same work. Halaby's (1979) study of women operators in a large utility company similarly indicated that differences in women's salaries were related to unequal access to higher paying positions rather than unequal pay as such. Gottfredson's (1978) research, however, suggested that unequal access is not a sufficient explanation for the differences in occupational status and earnings between men and women. He found that sex differences in aspirations among adolescent and adult samples were consistent with actual employment, and concluded that women hold lower paying jobs because they aspire to them.

Such differences in aspirations, actual employment, and salary earned have prompted an increased focus among educators and career counselors on the career planning needs of women (Fitzgerald and Crites, 1979; Walsh, 1979; Garbin and Stover, 1980; Karpicke, 1980). Much of the literature suggests that effectively meeting the career planning needs of women dictates assistance that is cognizant of the sex role socialization of women in the past (Patterson, 1973; Ohlsen, 1968; Harren, Kass, Tinsley, and Moreland, 1979; Moreland,

Harren, Krimsky-Montague and Tinsley, 1979), and the multiple roles she is likely to face in the future (Blaska, 1978; Farmer, 1976; Hetherington and Hudson, 1981).

How well institutions of higher learning are meeting the career planning needs of women is unclear. The present study surveyed recent graduates of the University of Maryland, College Park, to determine what differences existed between male and female graduates on employment status, degree of satisfaction with the educational experience, use of career planning resources, and current career needs.

Method

An anonymous questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 686 of the 2909 graduates who received Bachelor's degrees from the University of Maryland, College Park, in May, 1979. Follow-up procedures yielded 542 (54% female, 46% male) usable questionnaires (79% rate of return) covering a period of six to ten months after graduation.

Data were analyzed using percentages, chi-square, t-tests, and analysis of variance. All differences were reported at the .05 level.

Results

There were significant differences between males and females in the kinds of occupations they entered, the types of organizations in which they reported working, the salaries they received, their satisfaction with their education and career planning, and the career planning needs they reported as graduates.

Occupations and Work Settings. Significantly more males (71%) than females (64%) reported professional, managerial or technical occupations, many of which have been traditionally male-dominated occupations. At the same time, fewer males (12%) than females (25%) reported clerical or sales positions,

which have often been female-dominated occupations. This pattern was repeated in the types of organizations in which males and females reported working. Significantly more of those graduates who reported working in an educational organization were women (75%), a traditional setting for them; and significantly more of those who reported working in large national/international business/industry were men (62%), a traditional setting for them. It must be noted that more females than males reported working in each of the other settings, i.e., federal government, state and local government, social/-community service organizationa, and other business/industry.[1] Based on these data, it appeared that women and men were largely employed in areas that have been traditional for them.

Salary Differences. The difference in salaries reported by male and female graduates followed the traditional pattern. Males employed full-time reported a significantly higher mean salary, $14,087, than females employed full-time, $10,411. In addition, this pattern was consistent across the occupational areas (see Table 1).

Satisfaction with Education and Career Planning. Both male and female graduates reported that they were satisfied with their present situation, and generally both were satisfied with their educational experience and their career planning. However, more males (71%) than females (61%) agreed that their undergraduate program helped them to prepare for their present situation and that they would take the same or a similar major again (72% and 65% respectively), and disagreed that they would have preferred a more practical/-job oriented major (70% and 65% respectively) or a greater variety of courses in addition to their major (59% and 52% respectively).

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[1] Tabular data available on request

Although there were few differences in the actual use of career planning resources by male and female students, males tended to be more satisfied with their career planning than females. More women graduates (mean = 3.03)[2] than males (mean = 3.22) agreed that career information was difficult for them to find at the university, and that college life did not permit sufficient time for career planning (mean = 2.70 and 3.02, respectively). More female graduates (mean = 1.99) than male graduates (mean = 2.31) also agreed that career planning should be available to students through the regular academic curicula, and that they would seek more help in choosing a major or a career (mean = 2.83 and 3.13, respectively), and with learning job search skills (mean = 2.40 and 2.78, respectively) if they had it to do over again. Thus women graduates tended to report a greater felt need for assistance in finding and utilizing the resources offered by the institution and for an approach to career planning integral to the structure of the educational experience.

Finally, women graduates expressed a greater desire for assistance with a variety of current career needs (see Table 2), and more females (47%) than males (37%) agreed that they could make better use of such services as alumni than they could as students.

Discussion

The results of this survey of recent college graduates showed that male and female graduates tended to enter occupations and work settings traditional for their sex, and to be compensated differentially within the same occupational category. Although the discrepancy in earnings held across occupational classifications, it is not clear whether women graduates were paid lower

[2] Items were scored on a 5 point scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree

salaries than males doing comparable work or whether they sought and secured lower paying positions as their preference. This latter interpretation gains some support from the fact that 53% of the women responding to the survey indicated that they were employed in their chosen field, and only 24% indicated that, though employed, they were looking for work in their chosen field. It is also supported by the fact that most women were satisfied with their present situation in spite of the fact that they received significantly lower salaries than their male peers. Weaver (1979) suggested that women do not differ in the levels of satisfaction they express about their employment because they are unaware that such discrepancies in occupational status and salary exist between males and females.

Kingdon and Sedlacek (1981) found that 43% of the freshmen women, upon entering the University of Maryland, College Park, aspired to careers that were not traditional for women. If, upon graduating, these women are entering traditional fields for women, many questions may be raised. Do women change and become more oriented to traditional careers because that is what is available? It was noted above that women graduates are relatively satisfied with their traditional jobs so there does not appear to be a begrudging acceptance of these jobs.

It may be that the women who leave school before graduation are the ones most interested in nontraditional careers. This area of research is one that may tell us much about the career planning process of college women, and its relationship to retention.

A clearer picture of the relationship which college women perceive career planning to have to their educational experience is also needed. The research reviewed by Blaska (1978) indicated that most college women expected to have both a career and a marriage, and that more senior women were committed to a

career than freshmen women. It may be that the primary focus of the college woman is on whether to have a career and a marriage, rather than on the choice of a career and appropriate planning for it. Tyler (1964), for instance, found that women tended to lag behind men in career development, particularly at the college level. This may be reflected in the greater need for career planning resources as graduates expressed by the women in our sample. It may also be evident in the differences in attitudes between males and females towards their education and career planning as students.

The process of career planning seemed to proceed more smoothly for the males in the present study. They had less difficulty securing and utilizing whatever assistance they desired, while the women graduates hardly knew where to begin. Women graduates consistently expressed a greater need for assistance as students: in choosing a major, in career planning, in job hunting, even in getting to the resources that would provide such assistance. Since there were few differences in the actual use of career planning services by the men and women surveyed, one wonders whether the attitudes expressed by these women reflected a basically different perspective about the relationship between a college education and preparation for a career. Such a perspective is certainly related to the way in which women are socialized to depend on others for their livelihood rather than perceive work as a major adult role. Fitzgerald and Crites (1980) have argued that confronting the process of sex-role socialization fundamentally distinguishes the work of career planning with women from that with men. The usefulness of the career planning resources available to the women in the present study may have been limited by their experience of sex-role socialization: neither taught to view themselves as entering occupations that maximize their potential nor to consider career preparation as an integral part of higher education.

Implications for Career Counseling

The results of this study have important implications for counselors of college women. Three implications will be discussed briefly.

First, the career planning process should begin very early in a college woman's education. In comparison with her male peers, she is more likely to require assistance as early as her freshman year or before in choosing a major and with exploring the variety of occupational options available to her. Such assistance would help the college woman focus not only on the choice of having a career, but also on the range of non-traditional as well as traditional occupations avilable to her. Such a process should also involve an examination of the realities of what happens to women college graduates in the job market, and preparation for dealing with the decision to pursue a traditional or non-traditional career area.

Second, a program of career planning for women must reach out to her through the established educational structures, e.g., academic departments and the academic curricula. The women in the present study had difficulty even getting to the resources that were available. The educational institution must recognize that the dependent role women are taught dictates greater responsibility on the part of the educational system to initiate career planning. This career planning must not only recognize such socialized dependency, but must also confront it, as Fitzgerald and Crites have suggested, by including such elements as assertiveness training and decision making skills.

Finally, career counseling for women must emphasize that career planning only begins with preparation for a career. It is important for college women to learn that career planning is a life span issue, that work as a major adult role requires reassessing the direction of one's career at various times

throughout one's life. Clearly the women in our sample were more aware of their need for assistance with career planning as graduates than they were as students. Such results suggest that an adequate career planning program for college women should either provide resources to recent alumni or facilitate their use of similar services in the community.

Table 1
Mean starting Salary of Male and Female Graduates
Employed Full-Time by Occupational Classification

Occupational Classification	Males Mean Salary	Females Mean Salary	Total Mean Salary
Managerial, Professional, & Technical (N=236)	$14,424	$10,866	$12,540
Clerical & Sales (N=53)	$12,979	$ 9,523	$10,305
Non-professional Service occupations (N=13)	$13,371	$ 8,993	$11,350
Agricultural, Fishery, Forestry & related occupations (N=8)	$10,250	$ 7,590	$ 8,920
All Others (N=9)	$12,367	$10,120	$11,617

Table 2
Current Career Needs of Male and Female Graduates*

	Need Help		Do Not Need Help		
Area of Career Need	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
Learning effective job hunting strategies. (N=539)	12%	21%	34%	34%	100%
Knowing how to find information about jobs in my field of interest. (N=532)	19%	32%	27%	22%	100%
Learning how to effectively communicate and be confident in job interview. (N=525)	10%	18%	35%	37%	100%
Exploring careers that fit my interests, skills, and values. (N=530)	17%	29%	29%	25%	100%
Learning about additional specialized training in my field. (N=532)	23%	34%	22%	21%	100%
Exploring career options that I may not have considered. (N=531)	27%	39%	19%	16%	100%
Identifying my interests and skills, and relating them to possible careers. (N=526)	15%	27%	30%	28%	100%

*Differences significant at .05 level using Chi Square.

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